



2022 Review of the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS)

Closed 18 Nov 2022

Opened 29 Aug 2022

Contact

standards@abs.gov.au

standards@abs.gov.au

Feedback updated 18 Jan 2023

We asked

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) commenced public consultation on 29 August 2022. The consultation requested feedback on the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS), the way the religion question is asked in the Census of Population and Housing.

The aim of the review is to update the ASCRG to reflect the modern Australian community; and ensure the RAS is inclusive. These updates will ensure collection and production of high quality data, improving data analysis and decision making. The public consultation was to confirm the scope of the review and invite feedback to identify any other high priority considerations for the review.

Public consultation ran for 12 weeks, 29 August 2022 till 18 November 2022. The ABS sought feedback on the preliminary scope of the review (below) and requested other issues also be identified.

2022 Review of ASCRG and RAS, preliminary scope:

1. Investigation of the RAS – question wording and pick list

- a. Can the response options be changed to be more inclusive?
 - b. Consistency between the question wording (refers to a person's religion) and the pick list options (a combination of religions and Christian denominations).
2. Investigation into Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism; and whether it is possible to identify additional religious groups.
 3. Investigation into how Christian Orthodox groups appear in the ASCRG and the RAS.
 4. Investigation into a possible restructure of the classification codes.
 5. Investigation into the structure of Broad Group 7, Secular Beliefs and Other Spiritual Beliefs and No Religious Affiliation. Should secular beliefs continue to be included in a classification of religious groups?

For more detailed information on the scope, please refer to *2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Scope v1.0*, attached below.

You said

This public consultation generated 193 submissions from a range of individuals and organisations.

Most of the items in the preliminary scope were broadly supported for inclusion in the review. The topics in the preliminary scope that attracted the most submissions were the pick list (content and order of the list) and question wording (scope items 1a and 1b).

In addition to the issues outlined in the scope, a number of other concerns were raised, including:

- Concerns around data quality, due to the limited number of options in the pick list.
- Concerns about potential bias in the question wording because it assumes a person is affiliated with a religion.
- The importance of including the concepts underpinning the classification (e.g. 'affiliation') in the review.
- Some confusion regarding the 2021 census advertising campaign, as it related to religion.

Other suggestions included:

- Recommendations for groups to be added to the pick list in the question, or the classification (ASCRG) itself.
- Suggestions for how religion data could be better presented in the future.

We did

The ABS is currently reviewing these submissions and working closely with stakeholders to draft changes to the RAS and ASCRG. The proposed changes to ASCRG and supporting information will be presented via the ABS Consultation Hub in mid-2023. Stakeholders can again provide feedback before the final update is published in December 2023.

Any changes for the RAS, that come from this review, will require further testing. Testing will be undertaken during the 2026 Census design process in the lead up to the 2026 Census. However, proposed RAS changes will be available for comment in mid-2023 through the planned ASCRG public consultation but the final outcome will be published after 2026 Census testing is completed.

Submissions that included relevant feedback for 2026 Census Content development and design will be provided to the 2026 Census Content team, stakeholders do not need to provide their submission again.

Future consultation

The next round of public consultation on the proposed changes to the ASCRG and RAS is expected to be conducted in mid-2023. However if you would like to provide feedback before then, please contact the ABS at standards@abs.gov.au

2026 Census Content consultation is planned for the first half of 2023. If your submission to this scope of the ASCRG and RAS review is relevant to the Census Content consultation too, it will be provided to the 2026 Census Content team - stakeholders do not need to provide their submission again.

Further information is also available in the FAQ and Scope documents under the heading **Related** below.

Any questions?

Please email standards@abs.gov.au with any questions on this consultation or for further information.

Overview

In 2022, the ABS will undertake a major review of the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the associated Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS; the Religion question in the Census of Population and Housing). The review will update the ASCRG to reflect the modern Australian

community; and ensure RAS is inclusive. These updates will ensure collection and production of high quality data, improving data analysis and decision making.

Why your views matter

While the current version of the ASCRG had some minor updates in 2016, it largely reflects the original 1996 version of ASCRG based on the social environment in Australia at that time. The Australian community has changed considerably over this time and the ASCRG and RAS both need to be reviewed to reflect this. ABS has also received feedback from individuals and organisations identifying areas that need to be reviewed. Data from the 2021 Census will further inform the review.

The information you provide will be used to inform the review and prepare for the 2026 Census.

To make a submission:

1. Please read the information papers:

- 2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Scope
- 2022 ASCRG and RAS Review FAQs
- 2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Survey Questions
- 2022 ASCRG and RAS Review timeline

All papers are linked under the heading **Related** at the bottom of the ABS Consultation Hub **Overview** page.

2. A link is provided on the ABS Consultation Hub for the Religion Review Survey where you will be guided to provide feedback through a series of questions. You are not required to respond to every question, although your submission will be strengthened by your ability to answer as thoroughly as possible and by providing supporting evidence where possible. To help prepare your submission a copy of the survey questions is provided in the document “2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Survey Questions”, under the heading **Related** at the bottom of the ABS Consultation Hub **Overview** page.

The closing date for submissions is 18 November 2022.

Related

 [2022 ASCRG and RAS FAQs v1.0.docx](#)

24.0 KB (Office Word 2007 XML document)

 [2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Scope v1.0.docx](#)

151.8 KB (Office Word 2007 XML document)

 [2022 ASCRG and RAS Review Survey Questions_v1.0.docx](#)

55.3 KB (Office Word 2007 XML document)

 [ASCRG and RAS Review Timeline v1.0.pdf](#)

219.4 KB (PDF document)

 [Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups \(ASCRG\)](#)

 [Religious Affiliation Standard](#)

Audiences

General Public

Interests

Customer Feedback

Share



[Accessibility](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Cookies](#) [Privacy](#) [Help / feedback](#)

 Citizen Space from Delib